

**William Preston to George Washington, March 7, 1774,  
Letters to Washington and Accompanying Papers.  
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**FROM COLONEL WILLIAM PRESTON.<sup>1</sup>**

FINCASTLE<sup>2</sup> March 7th. 1774

SIR

I recd. your Letter Inclosing a Warrant for 2000 Acres, & a Certificate of Mr. Crawford's for 2050 Acres in the Fork of the great Kanhawa and Cole River, by favour of Mr Young.

Be assured Sir that nothing could have given me greater Pleasure than to have complied with your Request had it been in my Power; and the rather as I see nothing in it that is unreasonable or unprecedented. When I was last at Wms.burg his Lordship presented me with two Platts of 2000 Acres each one for Doctr. Connilly & the other for one Warrenstaff and requested, nay even urged me to sign them; as they had been Accurately Surveyed by Mr. Douglas, an Assistant to Capt. Bullet who had been regularly appointed by the College, I with some Reluctance Signed the Certificates by which those Gentlemen immediately obtained Patents. This Transaction has made a great deal of Noise; & indeed it is the Opinion of many good Judges that the Patents are altogether illegal. This alone is my Reason for not complying with your Request, and the promise I then made to Colo. Lewis on your Behalf; for at that Time I could not foresee any ill Consequence that could attend such a Step.

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I have Advertized the Officers who obtained Warrants from Lord Dunmore to meet my Assistants at the Mouth of New River the 14th. of April. Two of these Assis the Assistants will go from hence down the River, and not far from the mouth of Cole River they intend to provide Canoes to proceed down the Ohio. I can think of no better Method than what Colo. Lewis has proposed; which is, that one of them on his way down shall Survey the Land and by the first Opportunity send me the Plan to be recorded. Colo. Lewis says he will endeavour to persuade his Son to go, or send a Surveyor, to lay off the Tract you have in Botetourt, & that he will return from thence imediately: Should the Colo. Succeed in this, then my Assistant could send up the Plan, & by that Means & Mr. Lewis & myself might have it in our Power to send you the Certificates before the rising of the next Session of Assembly.—If Mr. Lewis can neither go, or send down the River at that Time, I shall leave no method in my Power unattempted to have your Survey made and returned to you before the Assembly rises, or to Colo. Bassett afterwards, who I suppose will transact the Business for you.—In the mean time I shall Enter the Land on my Book & send you a Copy this I suppose will secure it to you untill it can be legally Surveyed.

The 2000 Acres on Salt River which Capt. Bullet mentioned to you & which he laid off last year, has been Entered some Time ago by Capt. Christian. Mr. Young has a Copy of the Entry. I believe all the Salt Springs discovered in that Country have been Entered.

I am Sorry it was not in my Power to comply with your Request, but for the Reasons I have given I hope you will excuse me, and the more so as I shall do all I can to have your Land Surveyed early in the Season, for which purpose I have kept Mr. Crawfords Certificate that it may be laid off accordingly.

I am with great Regard Sir Your most Obedt. hble Servt. WM. PRESTON

1 Born in Country Donegal, Ireland, December 25, 1729; died at his home, Smithfields, in Montgomery Country, Va., July 28, 1783. Colonel Preston, himself a man of no little prominence, was the father of Governor James Patton Preston and General Francis Preston, and the grandfather of General John Smith Preston, Major Thomas Lewis Preston, Senator William Campbell Preston, William Ballard Preston, Secretary of the Navy during the

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latter part of Zachary Taylor's administration, and William Preston, U. S. Minister to Spain under Buchanan. In 1761, Colonel Preston married Susanna Smith, of Hanover County.

<sup>2</sup> In 1773, William Preston was appointed county surveyor of what was then Fincastle County. This county, formed from Botetourt in 1772, was in 1776 divided into Kentucky, Montgomery, and Washington counties. It embraced all southwest Virginia and Kentucky.